



The Tapestry of Life

Patricia Hallman

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*I dedicate this book to the people who helped
weave the tapestry of my life – friends, relatives,
my husband, my children, and the great
joy of my life – my grandchildren.*

Remember...Nana loves you!

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Chapter One

Where It Begins

This is my story, Patricia Hallman. Because what we all start with is the sum of everyone who has gone before us, my story starts with family – my father’s family and my mother’s family. Our roots are in eastern Pennsylvania, in the beautiful country of the Lehigh Valley. There are mountains, forests, parks, and the Delaware River within a few miles of where we all lived.

Bangor, Pennsylvania, is a very old, small town located just forty-five miles southeast of Scranton – south of Stroudsburg and the Delaware Water Gap, and north of Easton and Allentown. Bangor was settled about 1760, and first incorporated in 1875. I don’t know when my great-great-grandfather, Jessie Weaver, was born or when he died. I don’t know what his wife’s name was. They had five children, and the oldest – my great-grandfather – was

born in 1857. So that's how long they had been in Bangor. Their children were Hiriam, Dorry, Jeramiah, Christian, and Emma. I don't know for sure, but I think my father's whole family worked in or around the slate quarries. Bangor is still peppered with slate, and that's how most of the men there were employed.

My great-grandfather, Hiriam Weaver, was born in 1857. (I've put all the names of the ancestors we can remember, and when they were born and died into an Appendix at the end of the book. It's interesting, but kind of hard to read much of.) Hiriam married Mary Speer, and they had eight children: Emery, John, J. Arling, Charles, Kate, Laura, Ella, and Anna. They lived in the Bangor area all their lives. Hiriam Weaver was seventy-one years old when he died, and Mary Speer Weaver was seventy-five when she passed away. Their children stayed around Bangor, too. I still have three cousins who live there today. Again, I don't know for sure, but I think the men probably worked in the slate industry; all the girls of the family married, and I assume they became homemakers.

Emery Weaver was my grandfather. He was born January 5, 1861. Unlike most of my father's family, he was not long-lived; he died of a stroke when he was forty-eight years old. He was buried in St. John's Cemetery in Bangor, where most of my father's family is buried.

Emery married Anna Strunk on May 30, 1891. (She lived to be eighty-four years old; she remarried after Emery died, and had another four or five children. She died in 1956.) Emery and Anna had seven children. They were Lottie, Minnie, Paul, and Chester Emery (my father). Then

there were two children who were born three years apart, but on the same day and month – June 9 – and who lived only a short time. These were Dilbert and Mildred. The baby of the family was my uncle Harry.

Except for my father, all of the family stayed in the Bangor area. The men worked in slate mining, the women were homemakers. I remember visiting them over the years, and my memories are very warm. They all had nice homes, and lived comfortably. They must have been a pretty close family. They are all buried in St. John's Cemetery in Bangor. We actually did not visit very often. My father had moved to Lehigh County after he and my mother were married – I think they lived in Allentown. Even now, Allentown is about an hour away from Bangor; then it was more like three hours. So when we did visit, or when my dad's family came to see us, it was a real treat.



1800s – Great-grandparents and Father's Family

My mother's family lived around Allentown for years and years. My great-grandfather on my mother's side was George Hartman. I don't know as much about him – or any of that side of the family, really – as I do about my dad's family. I don't even know my great-grandmother's name - George Hartman's wife, that is. They had three children, one of whom was my grandfather (my mother's father), John Hartman. He was born March 6, 1876, and he was ninety years old when he died, on December 17, 1966. He was descended from one of the tribes of American Indians. I don't know which one, or how far back it goes. But that was one of my most vivid recollections about him.



1960 – My Grandparents - Emma and John Hartman

He was a warm and humorous man. Actually, he just loved life. Prior to the Depression, he owned and operated a hotel in Greenawalds, which was outside of Allentown. The hotel (which was just called "The Inn") had a well-known restaurant in it, and I still use two of his best recipes – crab cakes and deviled clams on the half shell. He managed to hold on to The Inn for some years, but then lost it during the Depression. After that he rented a farm around Ballietsville, and he farmed all kinds of vegetables, and chickens and eggs, and even some pigs at one time. Then, later, he went to work for Mack Trucks.

He had married Emma Burkhart in 1899, when they were both twenty-three years old. (My grandmother was born on December 10, 1875.) They were married for sixty-seven years. They lived together and worked together right up until he passed away. They lived in a small mobile home on my uncle's property. She only lived for a little less than five months after my grandfather passed away. It seemed that she just lost her will to live after he was gone.

She was a real character. She could crochet anything. She didn't use patterns – she just looked at something (like, say, a border around a newspaper ad) and then she would pick up her crochet hook and start making the border. It always came out right. She crocheted ends and borders for pillowcases that I still have today.

She also loved baseball. She was a Philadelphia Phillies fan. She loved to watch Phillies game on television. She would sit there – crocheting and watching the ball game. If you went to visit her when the ball game was on,

you might as well have been non-existent. That was when she was in her late eighties. (She was ninety-one when she died.)



1890s - Emma Burkhart - my Grandmother



1917 – Left to Right: Hartman's - John, Catherine, George, Dorothy (mother) and Marie

John and Emma Hartman had six children: Marie was the oldest, and she grew up and got married and had a very large family – nine or ten kids, something like that. The next oldest was my mother, Dorothy Ann – she was born January 8, 1905 and she died December 8, 1942. She died just two weeks before my father did but more about that later. George Hartman was the third oldest, and the

first boy. Then there was Franklin, who was born with an enlarged heart, and died when he was thirteen years old. Then there was Catherine (the aunt who became our guardian after my parents died), and last of all John Jr.

My sisters Claire and Barbara and I worked for quite a while to piece this all together. There are lots of holes, of course, but what you see is a pretty long line of families. One right after another. It gives me almost a prickly feeling to know that my own family and then my children's families will take our places in this long, long line that seems somehow just to march from one generation to another.

Prickly, yes. But warm, too. And proud.

Chapter Two

The Trouble with Santa Claus

Well, so Chester Emery Weaver married Dorothy Ann Hartman, and they started a family. Their first child was Elizabeth, called Betty. She was born in 1928. Claire was born in 1930. Then I came along six years after Claire. That much difference in timing between children always makes you wonder: planned or accidental? I have discussed this with my older sister Claire. We came to the conclusion that it was probably planned, and maybe because it was the middle of the Depression.

At any rate, I was born January 22, 1936, at home in Catasauqua, which is today a borough adjacent to Allentown. A doctor was there, and my father's mother (who, if you remember, had a lot of "on-the-job-training" in child-birthing; she had twelve children of her own), and my father. My two sisters had been taken to the next door neighbor's house when my mother went into labor.



*1930 – My Parents- Chester and Dorothy Weaver
and sister Betty*



1928 – Sister Betty



1930 – My sister Claire



1937 – Me, aged 1

When I was born, my father went and got them and told them they had a baby sister. My mother chose my name – Patricia. Mostly I’m called Pat. Some people tried to call me Patsy, but I really didn’t like that. I think maybe it’s because I always connected that name with “being a patsy.” But anyway, the only person who called me Patsy and got away with it was my father’s sister-in-law, Aunt Lula. But *nobody* argued with Aunt Lula.

Claire remembers that she was very happy to have a sister, but that my father had been hoping for a boy. Well, he got his wish when my brother Carl was born in 1940. The last of us kids was my sister Barbara, who was born in 1942.

By that time, my father was quite ill. He had started to become ill sometime early in 1940. He was hospitalized once, and then in 1942 he was hospitalized again. He had Hodgkin’s disease. I don’t know how it was treated; I don’t even know if they called it cancer then. He was very sick, but he was able to work during all that illness period. He drove trucks for the Atlantic Refining Company. I think he delivered to gas stations locally, because he came home every night.

My father always had a steady job, all the way through the Depression. He even earned enough to be able to help out a couple of members of the family with bags of groceries and stuff like that from time to time. I remember learning not to waste things from my grandmother. She was always like that. If you had a little bit of something left over from a meal, you put it away in the refrigerator and incorporated it into another meal later in the week.



1940 – My brother Carl

She was always a great baker. She set aside one day of the week for baking. She made all her own bread, and also pies, cakes, cupcakes, and cookies. There was a “pie face” in the basement of the farmhouse; it was a kind of cupboard that hung from the rafters, and that was where everything was stored. It was perfect, because no mice or

bugs or anything like that could get in the food that was kept in the “pie face.”

My mother baked, too. She didn't bake bread, but she did bake cookies and cakes and cupcakes and pies. She baked a lot, but not on the level my grandmother did.

My parents were good people, with a good relationship. They were both strict, and they disciplined us kids when we needed it. But neither of them was harsh. My dad was basically a very pleasant person, and my mother was great – she had her moments, but she was loving and generous, and never harsh.

I was apparently a pretty ordinary little kid: I walked when I was supposed to walk, talked when I was supposed to talk – that kind of thing. At any rate, there aren't any family stories about me when I was a baby and a toddler. My sister Claire doesn't remember anything in particular, and neither do I.

I know we had fun, we played games, and we had toys (no pets, though). It's just that nothing stands out especially.

Except Santa Claus.

I was terrified of Santa Claus. This is how it happened.

One Christmas, when I was five or six years old, our family was gathered around in the dining room. I don't remember whether we were expecting Santa Claus to

come, or we were having supper, or what – but all of a sudden there was Santa Claus outside the dining room window. He had a big stick that he banged on the window with, and he shook it at us. I thought he was going to break the window, come in, and hurt us somehow. He was so threatening. I was scared stiff.

Then the next Christmas, when my mom took us into Hess's Department Store to see Santa Claus, I wouldn't even go down where he was. I was really, really afraid of him. So there are no pictures of me, sitting on Santa's lap. I grew out of it, of course, but my memories of how terrifying Santa Claus was are very sharp.

Actually, that must have been the Christmas that came when I had just started to school. I didn't go to kindergarten; I went straight into first grade. I was five years old, and I went to St. Mary's Catholic School in Catasauqua.

I suppose I was excited about starting school – most kids are – but when the very first day came, I did NOT want to go. I wanted to stay home with my mother. I was quite determined, because my two older sisters, Betty and Claire, were given the job of taking me to school – kicking and screaming all the way. We walked to school – or, rather, Betty and Claire walked to school, and dragged me. It was only about five blocks from our house. I don't remember repeating that performance other days – just the first day of first grade.

So we walked to and from school twice a day. We went home for lunch. We had an hour for lunch, and my

mother always fixed our lunch and ate with us. Then we walked back to school for the afternoon.

Once I got into the swing of things at school – this was at St. Mary's, for my first four grades – I really liked spelling and arithmetic. I don't remember liking or disliking any other subjects; those two were my favorites.



1941 – Me, aged 5

Mary Ann Gillette was one of my best friends. Her family lived about three or four blocks up the street from us. I remember that it was a large family. Mary Ann was my same age, and she and I were together in school up to the fourth grade.

We moved to Allentown during fourth grade. Things were very different there, and there was no way to stay in touch with any of our old friends. Somehow, it didn't seem like a very big deal; your parents said you were moving, and you moved. It was all pretty businesslike.



1936 – My Godparents- John and Helen Pascoe

Chapter Three

Life with Mom and Pop

As I look back over my life, I see that Christmas time is always a really hard time of the year. Of course I had the scary experience with Santa Claus at Christmas time. But just before Christmas when I was in second grade, both my parents died.

Of course, we knew my father was sick. He had been in the hospital once before, and we went to visit him. But some time before Christmas he was hospitalized again. My mother visited him, and although she may have known that he was going to die, none of us kids did. We just knew he was sick.

Then one day, when we came home for lunch, an ambulance was at our house. They took my mother away in the ambulance.

We had not known that she was sick. This was 1942, remember. Things were not discussed with children much at all then. There was not as much openness as there is now. My mother never appeared to be sick, but I learned later that she had earaches a lot. She went to the doctor, and he gave her drops to put in her ears. But of course that wasn't really the problem.

She had undiagnosed mastoiditis. I don't know if the word "cancer" was used for this at the time. I don't know the connection to the earaches, but she had terrible pain in her ear – I don't know which one – and chills and fever. She was operated on by a neurologist who came from Philadelphia. They just started the operation, but then closed it right up. There was absolutely nothing they could do by that point.

She went into the hospital the first or second of December and she died on the eighth of December. She was actually in the same hospital my father was, although the last time they saw each other was when she had visited him last.

My grandmother had come to stay with us when my mother was taken to the hospital. Then the day she died, the hospital got in touch with my grandfather and told him that she didn't have much longer, and any family that wanted to be with her should go on ahead in.

My mother's younger sister Catherine, my sisters Betty and Claire, and I were with her when she died.

Then, less than two weeks later, on December 22, my father passed away. I heard that he was very, very upset when he was told about my mother's death. My grandfather told him my mother had died, and he almost went crazy. He had to be restrained, tied to the bed. Aunt Catherine said it seemed like he lost his will to live at that point. He just didn't want to live anymore without my mother.

At this time, there were five of us kids. Betty was the oldest, and she was fourteen. Barbara was just a baby – not even a year old yet. Apparently my mother had had some sort of premonition that something was going to happen to both her and my father. She had talked with her sister Catherine and said, "If anything happens to Chester and me, will you see that the kids are taken care of?" At the



time, it surprised my Aunt Catherine, but when it turned out that they both passed away like that, she said, "Well, I am going to take them and I am going to raise them." She became "Mom" to us all. And after she married, her husband became "Pop."

1930s – My Guardian- Catherine Bleam (Mom)

At the time, there was a lot of hullabaloo. The families had gotten together – and that meant there were a *lot* of people involved – and they were talking about somebody taking this one, and somebody taking that one. Of course, everybody wanted the two little ones, but Betty and Claire and I were not so popular. That’s when Mom made her announcement. She would take us all.

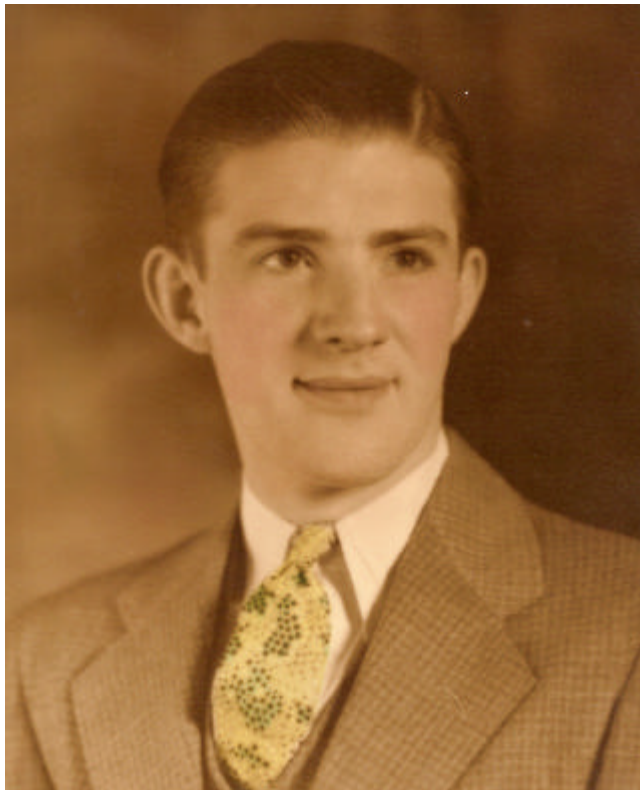


1942 - Sister Barbara

Everybody was surprised, and gave her quite a bit of flak: You’re not even married yet. What do you know about raising kids? How are you going to manage? That kind of thing. But she just said, “I’m planning to get married anyhow, to Mearle. And since we’re going to get

married, we might as well do it now, and then we are going to take these kids and raise them.”

My grandparents apparently really raised heck about this, and finally they compromised: they would take Betty and raise her as their own, and Catherine could do the same with the younger ones. So Betty grew up away from the rest of us, with my grandparents, on their farm, in Ballietsville, Pennsylvania.



1930s – My Guardian- Mearle Blear (Pop)

Catherine and Mearle Blear were married on her birthday, February 6, 1943. On that day they became the

proud parents of four children. They just moved into our house the day they were married, and then life went on.

We lived in our same three-bedroom house. Claire and I shared a room. We were close as sisters, but we had very different interests. She was just getting into her teen years, and I was six years younger. Those six years made a whole world of difference. I don't think we paid much attention to it, though, because we were busy all the time.

We went to school, and came home and did our homework first thing. Then we did our chores – cleaning, helping with supper, doing the dishes, that kind of thing. Then it was time for supper, and then it was time for bed. We had a good life, but there wasn't much spare time – most of it was accounted for.

Sundays we went to church. Our family had always been pretty strict Catholics but without making a big deal out of it either. We always went to church; we went to Catholic school; I was baptized Catholic, and received First Communion and Confirmation in our same church.



1943 – My First Communion

Now, First Communion *was* a big deal! There were lots of relatives at the house, and a big celebration. Somebody had brought a camera, because I have pictures of the party at our house.

Mom and Pop were never able to have any children of their own. It never seemed to make any difference to any of us that we four kids weren't their own. We always knew how much we loved each other.

Oh, we were disciplined when we needed it. We weren't spoiled. But Pop was not a natural disciplinarian. If he had to discipline us, he would do it and then go into another room and cry. We all knew that Mom was the disciplinarian. She was always fair, but she was strict. She usually saw that the punishment fit the crime – whatever it was you had done.

We moved from Catasauqua to Allentown in 1944. Our house was being sold, but it was a good move anyway since Pop worked in Allentown. Ever since he and Mom started taking care of us, he had had to get to work on the trolley. He worked at the Neuwiler Brewery, in the bottling plant. When we moved, our house was actually only four or five blocks from where he worked.

Pop was really kind of amazing. One day he was a thirty-year-old man with a girlfriend, and the next he was a thirty-year-old husband and father of four children. He really took good care of us, just like we were his own and always had been. He was a good man, a happy man. He had a great sense of humor – both he and Mom did. And I guess they needed it!

They never expected us to be more than we could be, but they always encouraged us to do our best. If we were doing our best, that was enough. The thing they most required was good behavior. Mom used to say, "You can be as dumb as a doornail, and I can handle that. But there is no excuse for bad behavior."

When report cards came home from school, she always looked at the marks for behavior before she looked at the actual grades. I was a pretty good student, so grades were never a problem for me and I was usually well-behaved.

Mom had a definite routine for herself in the house. Claire and I thought it was pretty ordinary and unexciting – we called it "mundane" – but Mom was serious about being a good, responsible homemaker. (Not that anybody called it that, then. It was just what you did.)

It was always the same and it worked. Monday, washing; Tuesday, ironing; Wednesday, cleaning upstairs; Thursday, cleaning downstairs; Friday, I guess she did whatever she hadn't gotten finished earlier in the week.

She did do some grocery shopping, but it wasn't the kind of big deal food shopping is today. It was during the war, and we had food stamps and rationing. Mom did a lot of canning of fruits and vegetables, so mostly we used food stamps for meat. We went to the butcher shop for that. Meat was rationed. So were sugar and butter and gasoline, of course.

But basically you got your book of stamps, and you used them very frugally during the month. Once you used up the stamps, there was no way to get more food till the next month's stamp allotment.

I remember that Mom had a gallon glass jar where she kept the sugar. One time the lid didn't get screwed on right, and red ants got in the sugar. We couldn't throw it out, because we had no way to replace it. So all that month we sifted the sugar to get the ants out. We didn't think it was bad, or too hard. That's just the way it was. You did what you had to do.

We had fun, though. I don't mean to make it sound like everything was just trudging along, one day after the next. Claire was six years older than I was, and she was into her teens. She had her own friends and her own interests. Carl and Barbara were very close; they were only two years apart, so they used to play together and keep each other pretty well occupied.

I was a little bit of a loner, I guess, but I loved playing outdoors. I especially liked roller skating up and down the sidewalk in front of our house. I had my own skates, and for a while I spent all my free time outside, skating. I did other things outside, too, but I tended to stick close to my mom most of the time. I liked to be with Mom, and I liked to help her while she was working.

Of course, Claire and I both had chores to do around the house. Doing dishes and helping to clean up the house – that kind of thing.



1943 - Mom, Barbara, and Pop (left to right)



1943 - Mom, Pat, Carl, Claire, Barbara and Pop (left to right)

We weren't what you would call a well-off family, but sometimes there was a little extra money, and some Saturday afternoons we would go to the movies. There was just enough for the ticket and a box of popcorn – with a penny change. I remember the gumball machines, and the jawbreakers, and the other penny candy. You really had to figure out what you were going to do with that penny!



1944 – In third grade

We had a radio then (there wasn't any television; this was still in the 40s). We had regular programs we used to listen to on Sunday night. The whole family would sit around the radio and wait for each one's favorite program.

We always listened to “The Shadow” and “The Green Hornet.” We never missed Jack Benny, George Burns and Gracie Allen, and Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy.

Pop always listened to the ball games. I don’t know what teams he rooted for, but he loved football and baseball. Then, every Memorial Day, he listened to the Indy 500. I thought to myself, “How can you sit and listen to a *car race* on the radio?” I still think you’d have to be a special kind of person to enjoy that!

We didn’t have a phone. We didn’t need one. Our next door neighbors had one, and if there was an emergency or something we knew we could go over there and they would let us use their phone.

We didn’t have a car. That was partly because we didn’t need one – we could either walk or take the bus anywhere we were going; but also because Pop did not like automobiles. He had been in a serious automobile accident when he was eighteen years old. His neck was broken, and he was in bad shape for a long time. He survived the accident and the broken neck, but he did not want to drive after that.

Mom was a wonderful seamstress. She made most of our clothes while we were growing up, and she even did dressmaking for other people. For special occasions, like Easter, we got something that was store bought. Mom had a catalog she would order from, and she often got my sister Barbara and me big sister and little sister dresses. We loved getting dressed up that way.

Mom was a very outgoing person, and she made friends easily. She liked people, basically – and she liked the chats over the backyard fence, and all that. She and Pop always made friends with the neighbours, wherever we lived. They were a very likable couple; people enjoyed being with them and talking and laughing with them. They were always ready to help anybody who needed something, whenever they could.

When the question comes up (and sometimes it does), “Were you happy when you were a child?” – I always say “Yes, of course.” We did not necessarily have everything we wanted, but we did have everything we needed. We didn’t think in terms of being “happy.” We had a good, loving family, and we were content. It was different then, easier to be content, because everyone you knew was in the same boat. We didn’t compare ourselves to each other, or envy each other. It was not like now, when you can turn the television on and see how rich and famous people live. When you do that, it’s almost impossible not to want what you see them have. That makes for discontent and dissatisfaction.

I think it’s better to be content, as we were.

